

# Preface

Interest in the reception of historical »entities« and the corresponding construction of historical narratives during the process of modern nation-building has increasingly moved to the centre of research. In the face of new nationalisms, primarily in Eastern and Southeastern Europe and the associated politically inspired historical (re)constructions, the reception of Byzantium requires professional historical expertise not only for the sake of disarming the politically committed interpretation of history but also of securing the scientific integrity of history, especially of such »small« historical disciplines as Byzantine studies. Dimiter Angelov grasped the essence of the problem when he said: »[...] Byzantinism, originating from the stereotyping and essentializing of a medieval civilization, was transformed into a popular construct used by journalists and politicians, and detached from the original historical reality of Byzantium«<sup>1</sup>. Our research group »The Legacies of Byzantium«, situated within the key subject area »Contact and Discourse within Christianity« of the Leibniz ScienceCampus Mainz »Byzantium between Orient and Occident«, aims to investigate the impact and reception of Byzantine history and culture in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century Europe and its appropriation and use as an argument.

Following the intentions outlined by leading researchers in this field<sup>2</sup>, who have already devoted much important research to phenomena of reception in literature, architecture and art history, music, philosophy and historiographical studies after 1453 and into the early modern age, we intended to carry out

much-needed research on the reception of Byzantium in Eastern and Southeastern Europe up to the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. To that end, we invited researchers from different regions and different scientific disciplines to share their visions and expertise during our conference »Imagining Byzantium, perceptions, patterns, problems«, which was held in Mainz from 2 to 4 March 2017. By focusing on the fields of historiography, theology and cultural studies, and linking yet transcending their approaches to research, we developed a perspective able to shed some light on the reception and utilisation of Byzantium in a highly volatile and ever-changing age. This volume represents the outcome of this conference and hopes to contribute to international and interdisciplinary discourse about the topic as well as providing an impulse for further studies on the »burdensome intellectual heritage«<sup>3</sup> of Byzantinism. This conference would not have been possible without the financial support of the Südosteuropa-Gesellschaft (Southeast Europe Association, Munich) and organizational support of the Leibniz WissenschaftsCampus Mainz »Byzanz zwischen Orient und Okzident« (Byzantium between Orient and Occident) and the Leibniz-Institut für Europäische Geschichte (Mainz).

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1 Angelov, Byzantinism 11.

2 Cf. Ignjatović, Byzantium's Apt Inheritors. – Kolovou, Byzanzrezeption in Europa. – Marciniak/Smythe, Reception. – Mishkova, Afterlife. – Nilsson/Stephenson, Wanted: Byzantium.

3 Angelov, Byzantinism 18.